MEETING OF THE COMMISSION O F FINE ARTS
20 MARCH 1963

AM
9:30 I. CONVENE, ROOM 7000, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT BUILDING

II. SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS-INTERVIEWS

9:35 1. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region
(Mr. T.Sutton Jett, Regional Director, National Capital Region; Mr. Robert Horne, Associate Regional Director, National Capital Region)

a. Lincoln Memorial - Proposed handrails and lighting for steps

b. Jefferson Memorial - Proposed handrails and lighting for steps

c. George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Recreation Area - Proposed Design of Comfort Stations

10:00 2. District of Columbia Government, Department of Buildings and Grounds

a. Hine Junior High School, 7th & C Sts., S.E. - Revised Design (Mr. G.A. Purcell, Liaison Officer, D.C. Department of Buildings and Grounds; Mr. Johnson, architect of Johnson and Boutin)

b. Mildred Green Elementary School, 15th St. & Mississippi Avenue, S.E. - Revised Design (Mr. Purcell; Mr. J.A. MacLane, architect of MacLane and Chewning)

10:45 3. District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency

Southwest Urban Renewal Area - Revised Plans for Development of Maine Avenue Waterfront
(Mr. Stanley Sherman, Chief of Project Design, RLA; Mr. David Orem, Director, Washington Channel Waterfront Corporation; Mrs. Chloethiel Smith, architect)

ADJOURN

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of
20 March 1963

Submissions

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   a. Department of Buildings and Grounds
      Mildred Green Elementary School-revised design 1

      Hine Junior High School- revised design 2

   b. Department of Licenses and Inspections
      Shipstead-Luce Act
         SL 2553 - 1845 Harvard Street - revised design for apartment building 2

2. D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency
   Revised plans for the development of Maine Avenue waterfront, S. W. Urban Renewal Area 2

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
20 March 1963

The Commission met, pursuant to notice, with David E. Finley, Chairman, presiding.

Present were: Members: David E. Finley
Peter Hurd
Douglas W. Orr
Hideo Sasaki
Ralph Walker

Staff: L.R.Wilson, Executive Secretary
C.H.Atherton, Asst. Secretary
C.L.Martin, Counsel
Susan E. Bennett, Adm. Asst.
Myra Younker, Editor
Mrs. Leone W. Vialpando,Recorder

I. SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS-INTERVIEWS

1. District of Columbia Government

a. Department of Buildings and Grounds

(1) Mildred Green Elementary School, 15th Street and Mississippi Avenue, S.E. - Revised Design

Mr. G.A. Purcell, Liaison Officer, D.C.Department of Buildings and Grounds, presented a small sketch of a proposed revision to the design of the central portion of the building.

Mr. Purcell reported that because of poor soil conditions disclosed by test borings it would not be possible to consolidate the building into three wings as the Commission had suggested. He also stated that the building was being designed as a two-story structure for 750 pupils with a planned future addition of six or seven classrooms for a maximum of 900 pupils to be built at a future date.

The members asked how school sites are selected in the District of Columbia. Mr. Purcell replied that, on request of the School Board, the General Services Administration procures the site and it is then accepted by the School Board. Only after the site has been chosen is the Department of Buildings and Grounds asked to design a school for it. The members commented that this was an unfortunate situation if it resulted in compelling the Department of Buildings and Grounds to design a school on an inadequate site, as in this case. However, they pointed out that the architect in the case of the Hine Junior High School had also been presented with a problem as regards the site and had resolved the difficulties, but in this case no attempt to redesign the school had been

made after two submissions to the Commission.

After further discussion of unresolved design problems in the proposed plan, the members of the Commission concluded that they could not approve the design as presented, and voted to reject it.

The Chairman was authorized to send a letter to the Engineer Commissioner for the District of Columbia setting forth the Commission's views. EXHIBIT A

(2) Hine Junior High School, 7th and C Streets, S.E. - Revised Design

Mr. Purcell and Mr. W. Boutin, architect of Johnson and Boutin, presented drawings and site plans of a revised design for the Hine Junior High School.

The members commended the architect for the manner in which the major functions of the building had been separated. They thought the revised design would result in a well functioning building. After requesting that drawings of the details of the building be submitted the members approved the revised design in principle.

The Chairman was authorized to send a letter to the Engineer Commissioner for the District of Columbia setting forth the Commission's views. EXHIBIT B

B. Department of Licenses and Inspections

Shipstead-Luce Act, S.L. 2553, 1845 Harvard St., N.W.-Revised Design

Mr. Julian P. Green, Assistant Superintendent for Licenses and Permits, reported that the drawing of the proposed apartment building reviewed by the Commission on the previous day had been submitted in error, and that the architect, Mr. Vernon C. Elmore, of Corning, Moore, Elmore and Fischer, had requested that it be withdrawn. New drawings would be presented at the April meeting, Mr. Green said.

No action was deemed necessary.

2. District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency

Southwest Urban Renewal Area - Revised Plans for the Redevelopment of the Maine Avenue Waterfront

Mr. Stanley Sherman, Chief of Project Design, Redevelopment Land Agency, Mr. David Orem, Director, Washington Chanel Waterfront Corporation, and Mrs. Chloethiel Smith, Architect of Satterlee and Smith, met with the Commission to explain a proposed redevelopment plan for the Maine Avenue Waterfront.

Mr. Sherman explained that the Washington Channel Waterfront Corporation is an advisory group with which the Redevelopment Land Agency contracted to prepare a plan for the redevelopment project; and that Mrs. Smith had been employed as a special consultant by the Corporation.

Mr. Orem described the area included in the plan, and some of the factors which contributed to the manner in which the plan was developed. He pointed out that new office buildings being erected along Independence Avenue and in the future L'Enfant Plaza would contain a daytime office population of 45,000 persons; that the Smithsonian complex on the Mall would attract 9 million visitors annually, and the proposed Aquarium in East Potomac Park should attract 3 to 5 million visitors annually. Also, upon completion the new residential area in the Southwest will have 6,000 dwelling units. Many of these people are expected to visit the waterfront each day. The waterfront, he said, has two main attractions: shops, restaurants and boating activities; and in order to link the facilities on the Mall with the waterfront area, the Corporation proposed that a system of minibus transportation be established, which would permit visitors and office workers to reach the Waterfront easily from the Mall. Mr. Orem showed the proposed route of the system on a map.

Mr. Orem explained that one of the most difficult problems being faced is the question of the amount and location of parking facilities. He stated that, by eliminating some of the uses considered in an earlier plan for the waterfront which provided for 4000 parking spaces, the Corporation had been able to limit the parking to 3000 spaces. These spaces could not be provided in the area between Maine Avenue and the bulkhead without preempting most of the land along the waterfront. Accordingly, the Corporation proposed that parking for the commercial establishments be provided in a series of five 2-story open structures. Some parking would be available along Water Street, a new street to be constructed between relocated Maine Avenue and the waterfront. The Corporation also recommended that a central underground parking facility be constructed north of Maine Avenue, near the Tenth Street overlook, to accomodate tourists and boat owners.

Mrs. Smith then read a prepared statement explaining the basis of the design she had prepared for the Channel Corporation. EXHIBIT C^1 There was a brief discussion of some aspects of the plan.

The members of the Commission thought the plan was excellent and resolved to recommend that the waterfront area be developed as a single entity rather than by individual tracts.

The Chairman was authorized to send a letter to the Director of the Redevelopment Land Agency setting forth the Commission's views. EXHIBIT C^2

Thereafter, at 12:00 noon the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

C L Martin

C.L. Martin
Counsel

27 March 1963

Dear General Clarke:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on March 19, gave further consideration to the design for the proposed Mildred Green Elementary School. Mr. Gerald Purcell, Liaison Officer, D.C.Department of Buildings and Grounds, presented a drawing showing a revised treatment of the principal entranceway. The other studies, which had been requested by the Commission, were not presented, nor was the architect, Mr. J.A. MacLane, present to discuss the design.

As stated in our letter written to you on February 27th, the Commission is at a loss to understand why a project, which has been rejected for basic design deficiencies on two prior occasions, continues to be presented for approval, essentially unchenged. Superficial modifications of details of the entranceway were not what the Commission had recommended.

The revised design for the Hine Junior High School was presented at the same meeting, and stood as a marked contrast. When first presented there were defects in the plan arrangement and composition that would have seriously affected the operation of the school. Yet, by expending a considerable effort, the architect was able to overcome the difficulties add develop a superior architectural solution. Why the same results cannot be achieved in the case of the Mildred Green School is difficult to understand.

Under the circumstances the members of the Commission were obliged to reaffirm their previous disapproval of the design for the Mildred Green School and to recommend that construction of this building be deferred until a more satisfactory design can be achieved.

The Commission does not like to be placed in the position where it must refuse to recommend the same project again and again, but when the members believe that no serious effort has been made to correct an unacceptable situation, there is no alternative.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

Brigadier General F.J.Clarke
Engineer Commissioner for the
District of Columbia
District Building
Washington 4, D.C.

David E. Finley
Chairman

EXHIBIT A

29 March 1963

Dear General Clarke:

I am writing in regard to the revised design for the new buildings to be constructed at Hine Junior High School which were presented at the last meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts.

The members of the Commission were pleased to see the progress that had been made by the architects of the project, Johnson and Boutin, since the design was first submitted in February. It was apparent that much effort had gone into making the new studies. The plan was greatly improved, and the architectural character indicated on the elevation drawings showed promise of developing into a design that will be well-above average.

The Commission commended Mr. Boutin personally for the manner in which he had overcome the restricted conditions of the program and the difficult site. If the design is carried forward at the same level, the completed buildings should be a credit to the District School System. At the same time it should serve as a good example of the results that can be obtained when a sincere effort is made by the architect to secure the best design and arrangement possible with the funds available.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Brigadier General F. J. Clarke
Engineer Commissioner for the
District of Columbia
District Building
Washington 4, D.C.

Copy to: Mr. J.A.Blaser, Director
D.C. Department of Buildings
& Grounds

EXHIBIT B

A MASTER PLAN FOR

THE WASHINGTON CHANNEL WATERFRONT

The plan presented today is an interpretation of the carefully worked out program developed by Washington Channel Waterfront, Inc. It provides a balance between commercial and public uses for a major recreation area. It is not a park with a few concessions scattered through it nor is it a commercial area with a few small parks scattered through it. It is an integrated design for an area that offers commercial as well as non-commercial recreation appropriate for development along a mile of the capital city's waterfront and close to its monumental core. It is designed as an urban area that will be visited by thousands of people throughout the year.

Of the 26 acres of land studied, 6.5 acres are devoted to parks, 7.5 acres to circulation - both vehicular and pedestrian, and 12 acres to the variety of commercial uses specified in the program. A maximum number of boats are served by new marinas and the fish wharves, Pier # 4 used by the Wilson Line cruise boats and Pier # 5 maintained by the District are retained. Unlike typical commercial blocks cut into small lots with an alley in back, this long, narrow strip of waterfront land is designed as a whole and individual lots for lease are subordinated to the design of the whole.

There are thousands of ways to distribute the land uses called for in the program. The simplest - and most common method would be to mark out a series of lots fronting on Water Street. A small developer could buy one lot and a large one could buy several. Normal restrictions could be developed - floor area ratios, maximum heights, side yards, etc. The resulting development would resemble other commercial areas which have been and continue to be built on this system. The resulting pattern is familiar.

EXHIBIT C'

Is it possible to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in large scale planning by developing a master design that makes both the individual parts as well as the whole a better design than it is possible to obtain from the individual lot system? Unless this is possible, "city design" can apply only to public spaces and private development can only be controlled - not designed.

The basic plan presented today is not complete nor detailed. But it does show a direction that could result in the development of a handsome waterfront that would take advantage of the emerging art of city design. No two dimensional land use map can create a group design - for a total design is three dimensional and the forms and heights of structures that define open spaces and the whole complex of relationships that enter into group design can only be developed as a total design. No set of restrictions can be a substitute for total design.

It is only in recent years that we have given ourselves the opportunity for major group design. Our cities grew lot by lot. Even the capital city, except for its monumental core - grew lot by lot - and today we are embarrassed by much of its ugliness.

Essentially - except for a fine row of trees along existing Maine Avenue, we are talking about a raw piece of land. Much of the land is new - filled to a new bulkhead. But - its location in the city is not new. This mile of channel frontage not only forms the boundary of the major Southwest Urban Renewal Area, but for much of its length it is close to and parallels the great monumental core of the capital city.

Where a major area of a city can be designed as whole, the opportunities for the creation of a beautiful area by positive design are greater than those which negative controls offer. Group design does not rule out ugliness. It only makes good design more possible. And - importantly - it offers a total picture which the client - in this case the people of Washington - can study and accept or reject. Controls can be deadening, but a lack of controls doesn't produce life.

A total design can accomplish both balance and variety - or can be a total deadening design. As yet, as a people - and as architects serving people - we have little experience in city design. Yet in recent years we have rejected ugliness that developed without design. Lively places in a city grew by themselves and weren't designed. It remains to be seen if we can create lively places.

The first requirement for this mile of Washington's waterfront is that it serve the public in a new way. It could have become a mile of green park and this would have formed a handsome boundary to the Southwest and a fine addition to the park system. Even the remnants of a port could have been destroyed. But - a port is exciting and the great cities that grew around ports had a special character and attraction. The piers and nearby streets were busy and lively. Washington has few busy and lively places - the great darkened Government buildings and the lonely parks offer nothing at night. On week-ends or after work, no special and lively recreation place attracts one. Picnic places, tree-lined walks, galleries - yes. But a merry-go-round on a pier, a gay place to dine under the trees and watch the boats come in - no.

No two people will agree on all the elements in design, but many people can agree on what they don't want. Sometimes common agreement on what they don't want brings agreement on what they want. It seems clear that Washington does not want a gaudy neon lighted row of competing restaurants and shops along this mile of waterfront. It seems clear that people don't want a mile long parking lot that would leave only the channel itself unpaved. It seems that they don't want just a park and no port - and no fish boats and no restaurants and no shops. But - how is it possible to agree on precisely what they do want? Someone must make a proposal. Ideally, this proposal should be a large scale model that would bring as much reality as possible to the proposal, but only a full scale model offers complete experience of reality. In lieu of this, lines and words must be used.

The whole design is based on the premise that views of the water from all commercial sites and public areas on the waterfront as well as views from Maine Avenue and inland sites to the north would take best advantage of the special character of the area. A wall of continuous structures would give views from sites on the channel side of Maine Avenue, but cut off views from Maine Avenue and the land beyond. The established use for inland sites dictated the locations of various uses. The proximity to the 10th Street Mall and proposed intensive development of this area for a major hotel and offices and extensive Government offices completed, under construction and planned for areas near the Mall, appeared to justify a concentration of commercial uses near this area.

Residential developments east of 7th Street appeared to be best served by a reduction in commercial use and a greater concentration of park area. The existence of expensive and sound piers to the south required good vehicular access and parking, but demanded buffer areas to protect the residential areas immediately adjacent to it. Since these residential developments were required to provide 100% underground parking, it was determined that commercial parking adjacent should be underground. If not, the requirement for underground parking for the residential sites would be negated. (The only open parking shown is at D. C. Pier # 5 which was outside the scope of our study, but we strongly recommend that all D. C. parking be covered and existing unattractive pier structures be remodeled to provide a better vista from the adjacent residential areas.)

Since the majority of uses proposed require one-story structures and this was consistent with the desire to retain views of the water from inland sites, a varied pattern of 1 and 2 story buildings (with a possible 3 story inn in Block "C") seemed to offer variety within each block as well as along the entire frontage. The proposed requirement for courtyards within each commercial area offers further variety in design as well as use and continues the pattern of public squares and plazas throughout the development.

The decision to create two major vehicular plazas at 7th and 9th Streets - the two major approaches to the waterfront - was based on two main premises. First, since they served the most intensive commercial blocks, they were needed for proper access to these blocks, they increased the effective commercial frontage available and they served as access to two public landings which were desirable additions to the public facilities offered. Second, because the land rises to the north, vehicular or pedestrian approaches down 7th and 9th Streets would have a wide view of the channel and East Potomac Park beyond and this would better express the special waterfront character of the area than closing the vistas by structures. These plazas and the squares east of the fish wharves were conceived as busy, urban squares - trees, fountains, sculpture - sitting areas and walking areas - all busy and lively. An historic ship at 9th Street and a small, gay merry-go-round at 7th would provide points of interest and the coming and going of boats to the public landings and people to the restaurants and shops that frame the plazas would all contribute to this liveliness.

East of site "C" - a major park has no vehicular access except at Water Street. Close to the major residential area to the north and separating Block "C" from the boat sales and marinas at Block "D", it is a protected square - hedged or walled from Water Street - a grove of trees, quiet sitting areas, flowers in the spring and pigeons fluttering down to be fed. Beyond Block "D" - another green square - not as protected, not as quiet, but a fine place to watch the cruise boats come in or the active major pier of the marina with strange boats up from the Chesapeake arriving and departing - and all the attractive clutter of a busy harbor. All of these squares are connected by a continuous public walk - but this walk along the bulkhead is not a dreary, straight line stretching on endlessly. It cantilevers out over the water at several points in front of the bazaar, it is interrupted by small green courtyards next to the bazaar, it narrows down as it passes a restaurant and widens out to a green plaza beyond. At one point, broad steps lead to a fountain and overlook, at another a sunken plaza gives protection from the wind and focuses our attention on a fine sculptured wall framed by flowering trees.

At Piers # 4 and # 5, the bulkhead walk may have to be interrupted, at least during part of the day and people walking the length of waterfront may go inland by a broad tree-lined walk along 6th Street, and up a few steps to the landscaped roof of the garage back of Pier # 4. On this roof there is a pool for skating in winter and model boat sailing in summer and it is also an overlook - for one can see the full sweep of the waterfront from here as well as the monuments and the Capitol dome.

South of Pier # 5 and as yet not designed in detail, a waterfront park continues to the gates of Ft. McNair. There are no streets here - N and O Streets are cul-de-sacs and 6th Street does not connect through. This quiet green park forms a fine contrast to the busy commercial areas near 7th and 9th Streets, and the active piers to the north. It becomes both neighborhood park serving the residents of Southwest as well as the visitors who want to walk along a quiet stretch of waterfront. At the corner where the park turns inland along Ft. McNair, there should be a handsome pavilion and overlook for the views from here swing from the long down river vista on up the channel to the 10th Street overlook and the monuments beyond.

Within the basic pattern of building, courtyard, park and pier there can be a thousand varied and stimulating experiences - you need not buy anything to enjoy a walk or a quiet hour sitting in the sun or you may buy a hundred things and dine and dance on a roof-top looking down river at the cruise boat docking. You may take a small sight-seeing boat and watch the lights slip by along the shore. You may ride in a warm small train and stop to walk a bit on a cold winter day and go in for hot clam chowder. An outdoor art show, a festival in one of the squares, a ride on the merry-go-round - every season of the year will offer its own appropriate attractions.

The variety in height and mass of buildings creates ever-changing frames and backdrops. People are sitting under umbrellas on top of a one story roof looking down into a tree filled plaza. Others from another story higher along Water Street look out across courtyard and roof to the channel and East Potomac Park beyond. The bolder scale of two major restaurants frames the extensive group of pavilions where thirty or forty small shops become part of a busy bazaar interspersed with open courtyards, but all connected by covered passages.

You can reach this mile of waterfront by public transportation, taxi or private car. You can travel the length of it by car or take a "train" - or a minibus. You can park in roofed and screened structures along the entire commercial area from the plaza east of the fish wharves to the square east of Block "C". Anyone who wishes to do so may provide parking below his restaurant or shop. Short term metered parking along Water Street will serve the carry out shop or retail shops and long term parking under the overlook connected by the "train" or minibus will hold 1,300 cars below a handsome green plaza and help to keep the waterfront itself from being choked with cars. (All I fear in this scheme is that so many people will prefer this to parking their own cars and will enjoy riding the train to the door of their destination that this major garage won't be large enough.)

The total amount of parking shown on the waterside of Maine Avenue is more than double that which would be required by zoning and the inclusion of the overlook garages provides almost 5 times that required. Because the land is "new" and the pressure for parking in all types of areas is apparently limitless, any attempt to limit parking in any way will meet with opposition. Probably each proposed commercial developer will consider the ideal plan one which offers him all the parking he would like either directly below or completely surrounding his business. The proposed plan does not preclude parking below, but it does not recommend that it be required. The traffic pattern recommended by our consultants as well as D. C. Highways calls for a service street to handle slow moving traffic approaching the waterfront. To provide

minimum turning and stacking areas between this and Maine Avenue requires that it be separated from Maine Avenue as shown. It could be placed at the bulkhead, but the program calls for a continuous pedestrian walk at the bulkhead and we believed that a waterfront for people was preferable to one for cars. The use of the land between Maine and Water Streets for parking seemed to provide both convenient access to all facilities and permit the development of the bulkhead for walks and parks and plazas and restaurants and shops along the water's edge. It is this concentration on the development of a waterfront recreation area that is responsible for the direction of the plan proposed. The attempt to provide a proper balance between commercial development and public use and enjoyment of this small amount of land so favored by its location with a long boundary of water so close to the heart of the city has resulted in compromises that any balanced plan requires. No single use is favored where it would detract seriously from the program which calls for a balanced development which will serve the public interest.

Within the basic total design there is room for great individual variety and flexibility - but we strongly recommend that a unifying order along the lines suggested be used to prevent the disorder of single lot design. A jumble of shapes, heights, forms and materials might serve a few single businesses, but it would not best serve the capital city. The attempt to coordinate public and private facilities into one unified design is difficult at best - but we hope, not impossible. This is an experiment and unless it can be worked out, "city design" will exist in name only and we will have to return to the familiar lot by lot type of development where parks are parks and commercial blocks are commercial blocks and the rewarding intermingling of the two will have to be abandoned. If it can be accomplished - it will serve as a precedent for other cities for there are no developments similar to this in the Country. Details in the solution offered can be criticized and changes recommended, but I believe the program is a fine one and that the essential directions of the proposed master plan fulfill the requirements of the program.

1 April 1963

Dear Mr. Doyle:

I am writing to confirm that the Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on March 20, took favorable action on redevelopment plans for the Southwest waterfront, as revised by the Washington Waterfront Development Company, Inc., and submitted by the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency.

It is the opinion of the members of the Commission that the revised plan would offer a sound and workable basis for the renewal of this important area. The members also support the views of the architect of the project, Mrs. Chloethiel Smith, that there is a compelling need to design and execute the entire project as a single entity, even though such a method would raise problems not encountered in more conventional procedures. The unique location of the waterfront in Washington calls for results that conventional methods of redevelopment would scarcely be able to realize.

The Commission looks forward to seeing the development of the details that remain to be worked out.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Mr. Phil A. Doyle
Executive Director
District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency
Washington 25, D.C.

EXHIBIT C-2